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MARCH 1976

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TONY DISTLER TO KEYNOTE AKT CONVENTION

Tony Distler, President-Elect of the American Theatre Association, and Chairman of the Department of Performing Arts and Communications at Virginia Polytechnical Institute and State University, will give the keynote address at the opening luncheon of the Association of Kansas Theatre second annual Conference. This year's conference is at the Holiday Inn Plaza in Wichita on March 12, 13, and 14.

Says Lloyd Anton Frerer, Conference Program Chairman: "I believe you will find this, our second Kansas Theatre Conference to be one of the most rewarding theatre experiences of your life. A host of distinguished guest artists will be with us from far away places, as well as some of the finest talents our Kansas Theatre has to offer. Professional performers will work with us in the arts of directing, mime, acting, design, criticism and readers theatre. There will be dramatic presentations from all levels of theatre throughout the state, and nationally recognized experts will share their experience and answer questions." □

MUSIC THEATRE OF WICHITA

One phenomenon typical of an organization like the Music Theatre of Wichita, is that with the exception of the city of Wichita itself, this group is better known nationally than it is in the state of Kansas. A member of the Association of Kansas Theatre, Music Theatre had its original non-profit inception in 1972, and has enjoyed four successful seasons. The group has received some \$185,000 in private and corporate contributions, combined with \$35,000 in training project grants from foundations

and agencies, plus over \$560,000 in production ticket income to finance the combined training-development-production programs of the first four seasons. Music Theatre's production season (normally beginning around June 1 and concluding the second week in August) is a resident season in Wichita's Century II Concert Hall. Productions are presented in runs of 4-6 performances at two-week intervals; the period between shows is used for special training programs on the amateur, educational and professional levels and, of course, to rehearse and prepare the upcoming productions.

"The production standard is high," says Music Theatre's Producer, James M. Miller. "Such a standard is set," he says, "to insure the entertainment of our 9-12,000 member audiences of each production and to support the professionally structured theatre arts standard, and the professional association this concept affords young, developing talent from the schools and universities of the Midwest."

Music Theatre's year round staff consists of Mr. Miller (who is also on the staff of Friends University), John Holly, Manager; Connie Wilson, Public Relations; and Mary Trammell, Ticket Manager. Offices are located in Century II. "We concentrate on planning, organizing and coordinating for the most successful realization of the summer season," says Mr. Miller. "Right now our work and product is the 1976 summer season: SHOW BOAT June 9-13, SWEETHEARTS June 23-27, GEORGE M July 7-11, THE MUSIC MAN July 21-25, and GODSPELL August 4-8. We hope our continued success and future developments will allow for some additional winter activities, perhaps including some kind of musical theatre tour."

One reason for the group's national reputation is its well publicized audition schedule. They begin by

trying to cast all roles from Midwestern university oriented faculty and students. Midwest auditions are scheduled for March 16 in Dallas, March 17 in Oklahoma City, March 18-20 in Wichita, and March 21 in Chicago. The artistic staff for the auditions will include a near-equal balance of personnel from New York and other nationally prominent musical theatre centers as well as from the Midwest, Kansas and Wichita. (Some preliminary Wichita auditions are being held in conjunction with the AKT convention).

Music Theatre auditions are not confined to the midwest, however. The schedule included Salt Lake City on March 6th and will take in New York on April 1st and 2nd. Music Theatre of Wichita is classified as Professional in the AKT Divisional structure, and all of their staff, performance, and production personnel are either salaried or compensated through substantial fellowships. However they are at the same time closely associated with both Wichita State University, and Friends University through academic options and faculty-student involvement. "Our administration is civic and non-profit," states Mr. Miller. "Our purpose is educational. Our organization combines what we feel are the strongest elements of professional, educational, and community theatre concepts." □

IT'S A FACT

In this case, FACT is alphabet-ese for the Festival of American Community Theatre, a vital activity for a vital and growing segment of theatre in America. To those involved in Kansas Community Theatre, now is the time to plan for your entry into the Kansas FACT '77. According to Twink Lynch, President of the Kansas Community Theatre Conference, our state festival will be held between November 1976 and March 1977, and the Midwest's Region V competition will probably be in April '77. The winner of Kansas FACT will compete in the region festival, and the regional winner will go on to vie for honors at the national festival in Spokane, Washington in June or July, 1977. The Spokane winner represents the United

States in the Festival of International Amateur Theatre in Monaco, August, 1977.

"FACT '77 rules are in process at the moment," says Twink, "however it seems likely that, since this is the year the big winner goes to Monaco, an American Play will be required." "The time limit," she added, "is 60 minutes, and the play can be a one-act or a cutting of a full-length play. Two person plays will probably not be eligible." □

KANSAS COMMUNITY THEATRE PEOPLE WELCOME ACTA!

The American Community Theatre Association (ACTA) Board of Directors held their winter board meeting in Topeka February 28 and 29 at Topeka Civic Theatre's Warehouse-on-the-Levee. The ACTA Board is composed of community theatre people from all over the United States; representatives attended from Spokane, Washington, and Palm Beach, Florida, Oakland, California, and Sudbury, Massachusetts. Not to mention Chicago, Memphis, and Stillwater, which are closer to home.

Among other items on their agenda was discussion of FACT '77 (Festival of American Community Theatre), the finals of which will be held in Spokane in June or July, 1977.

Twink Lynch, President of the Kansas Community Theatre Conference, attended the Board Meeting in her new capacity as ACTA Board Member, filling the unexpired term of Harv Thompson of Madison, Wisconsin, who resigned in order to take on another job for ACTA.

Topeka Civic Theatre Board Members served as hosts for ACTA and other Kansas community theatre people Saturday night for TCT's dinner theatre presentation of THE MOUSETRAP, and at a party at the Warehouse afterwards.

On the local scene, Twink and Pam are back on the road again after a break over the Holidays, and have visited Wellington and Paola. Further details regarding these visits will be reported in the KCTC newsletter.

get on **THE MARQUEE**

Send news items to:
Editor, Marquee
201 Humanities Bldg.
EKSC
Emporia, Kansas 66801

With regard to the AKT Convention in Wichita in March, Sherwood Lohrey, Managing Director of Theatre Memphis, has agreed to conduct several workshops. Theatre Memphis won FACT '75 with their production of SCHUBERT'S LAST SERENADE. Mr. Lohrey will also serve on the Job Market panel, to be led by Hugh McCausland of Washburn University in Topeka, so that information will be available regarding kinds of jobs available in community theatre. ☐

ACTF

Emporia Kansas and the Region VI American College Theatre Festival were featured recently in the **Washington Post**, by **Post** drama critic Richard Coe, one of the festival guests. Coe asks in his column: What are actress Joan Fontaine, playwright Robert E. Lee, and designer Jo Mielziner doing in a town of less than 24,000 population two hours drive from the Kansas City Airport? The answer he gives, of course is that Kansas Theatre is alive and well enough to feature such talent at such a festival. And not only Kansas and Region VI, but all 13 ACTF regions.

"To a degree," says Mr. Coe, "these festivals are more important than the culminating Washington festival, which begins its eighth series April 5 at the Eisenhower. Though dwindling financial sponsorship this year will cut back the fort-night's offerings from 10 productions to seven at the Kennedy Center, regional festivals have been growing in attendance, interest and the presentation of new plays. As politicians know so well, the grass roots are the source of supply for the Washington spotlights."

Coe gives generous praise to the Region VI festival, making special mention of the fact that three of the four plays featured were originals—a growing trend. "Last year," says Coe, "five festivals offered new plays. This year nine of them have presented 36 originals. This reveals that the colleges are aware that our theatre cannot keep on reproducing the familiar."

Coe, who was a valuable asset to the Midwest festival himself found himself "stimulated by the eager young and grateful for the creative veterans who catch ready enthusiasm not always blooming on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts." ☐

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MARQUEE NEWS

Jim Miller's informative letter on the Music Theatre of Wichita, with a request that it be shared in part with the Kansas theatre constituency, will undoubtedly stimulate more of you to let the **Marquee** know what you're doing. Please let us hear from you, so that we can help you hear from each other. ☐

FLINT HILLS FESTIVAL

Poet Nikki Giovanni, billed promotionally as "The Princess of Black Poetry" will be special guest of the fifth annual Flint Hills Oral Interpretation Festival, slated for April 8 and 9 on the Emporia State Campus. Focusing on both readers theatre, and the individual performance of prose and poetry, this year's festival will also feature as guest critic Dr. Wallace Bacon, well known Chairman of the Interpretation Department at Northwestern University. Both Ms. Giovanni and Dr. Bacon are scheduled to present reading hours at the festival. For more information, write the Department of Speech, EKSC, Emporia, Kansas 66801. ☐

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